



BEAUTY BEYOND COMPARE TO BE SPARED — NASA has taken this three-quarter century old wistaria vine at Gainesville under its protection and will preserve it for posterity. It is believed to be one of the largest wistaria vines in existence, being about a foot thick where it leaves the earth. It climbs a hundred feet or more away and up an old cedar tree. The vine is at the height of its beauty now. Captain William C. Fortune said that the area will be fenced and protected by NASA. Mrs. Margaret McCormick, his secretary, is shown in this photo admiring the great vine, and in the inset is Mrs. Cora Blue Davis, 77, who remembers the vine as a small child when she played on this hill above the East Pearl River.

Great 75-year-old Wistaria Vine at Gainesville NASA Headquarters will be Fenced and Protected

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration, hurrying to put men on the moon, moved this week to preserve a gigantic wistaria vine at Gainesville which some old timers believe may be the largest in the world. The main vine is a foot thick and it has spread all over the ground and an adjacent cedar tree sixty or seventy feet tall.

It sits on the NASA temporary office building lawn, and will be visible as the new construction is under way.

Captain William C. Fortune, project manager for the Saturn booster test project at the Mississippi Testing Operations, this week ordered a protective steel wire fence put around the venerable old plant, just now at the height of its beauty.

"We will put a plaque on the fence, and preserve this vine as a memory of old Gainesville", Captain Fortune told the Picayune Item when his attention was called to the wistaria, which is about 75 years old, its saplings thick and its growth spreading thickly.

The action was the first taken by Fortune to preserve old trees, vines, landmarks and vestiges of old Gainesville whenever and wherever possible. "We will disturb the natural beauty of this magnificent country as little as possible", he said several months ago. "We will try to preserve and save the great oak trees and other living landmarks of this area which are not in the way of the space program".

Mrs. Cora Blue Davis, who

at 78 years of age rode out of Gainesville last July on the front porch of her house being moved by Daley Dronet to the Jackson Landing road near Ledner's Grocery, remembers the vine was small when she was a very young girl playing on the Pearl River bluff which now is the NASA headquarters.

Her father, Frank Moolekamp, built the Homer house on this knoll and as a little girl she used to carry his noon dinner pail from her home, adjacent to the Gainesville cemetery.

Mrs. Davis believes the vine is about her age, and she will be 77 on June 2. "I remember it was just a little thing between 1890 and 1900 when we used to play on this hill. My sister later lived in the house which my father had built. John Peterman lived there first and operated a box factory and sawmill on the river nearby. That was before 1895. I guess the vine might have been five to ten years old then".

Today the gigantic purple-leafed vine springs out of the ground like a tree, reaches about fifty feet away to embrace a gnarled old cedar, itself more than a century old, with its beauty and fragrance. The vine is only a few feet from the door of the Rouseon House which is NASA's temporary headquarters and Captain Fortune's office when he is in Gainesville.

Mrs. Davis made one of her rare pilgrimages back to Gainesville this week to have a look around the old village where she was born in 1886, and lived her entire life. She went to school in the old abandoned courthouse as a child, married and raised eleven children live around her in the Jackson Landing area in southwest Picayune. "It's just like taking good medicine for me to go back and see Gainesville", she said. "It does me a world of good."

"Blue" or "Aunt Blue", got that name from the color of her eyes and the nickname given her by her father. She thinks probably the greatest thrill of her life was rocking along in her rocking chair from Gainesville to Picayune on the front porch of her house. Her children and neighbors tried to discourage that adventure, but she remembers "nothing could stop me. I was 16 years old that day."

As Gainesville's oldest continuous resident Mrs. Davis now is a source of information for the Corps of Engineers and appraisers about many old forgotten facts about Gainesville which she remembers from childhood. They come to see her frequently seeking facts unavailable elsewhere.

"I surely would like to see that man get to the moon from Gainesville", she said this week. "I guess that would help pay us for having to leave that beautiful place, the finest on earth for those who lived

PHOTO BY MARGARET MCCORMICK FOR THE PICAYUNE ITEM